

Afghanistan then and now

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BY RICHARD FURNO—THE WASHINGTON POST

Pre-War Afghanistan

- ◆ One of the more liberal Islamic countries—*purdah* rare
- ◆ Weak central government (kingdom) with political power residing primarily locally among tribal, village, extended family and *qwam* leaders
- ◆ Mullahs and Imam have religious authority but no political leadership

- ◆ Pushtu majority with Tadjik, Uzbek, Nuristani, and Hazara minorities
- ◆ Sunni Muslim except Hazara, who are Shia. Strong Sufi influence
- ◆ 10% literacy rate
- ◆ Traditional warrior society with a tradition of independence
- ◆ Primarily rural country with agriculture and herding providing bulk of employment
- ◆ No railroad, limited road network

The world of the 1970s

- ◆ West in retreat before communism and nationalism--Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Ethiopia, Iran, Middle East, Chile, El Salvador, Argentina
- ◆ Kissinger talks of nation in decline making the best deal it can
- ◆ US losing leadership of free world—Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter

- ◆ Soviet Union in ascendancy
- ◆ Soviet internationalists in Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Ethiopia, Angola, Egypt, Syria, Latin America, Mozambique, Congo
- ◆ Support to revolutionary cells in West Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Japan
- ◆ Financial aid to Western communist parties including CPUSA
- ◆ Espionage penetration of West

Afghanistan in the 1970s

- ◆ July 1973-Overthrow of King Zahir by Prime Minister Daoud
- ◆ April 1978-Overthrow of Daoud by Communist coup. DRA. Split between Parcham and Khalq
- ◆ February 1979-Murder of Ambassador Dubbs. Mujahideen to field as civil war sweeps land and refugees flood Pakistan
- ◆ September 1979-President Taraki killed by successor Amin

Soviet relations with Afghanistan

- ◆ Afghanistan first state to recognize USSR
- ◆ Foreign aid competition with Germany and US for influence—
Salang tunnel, highways, economic development, Jalalabad canals, training in USSR
- ◆ After Eisenhower's 1953 visit, de facto Soviet sphere of influence

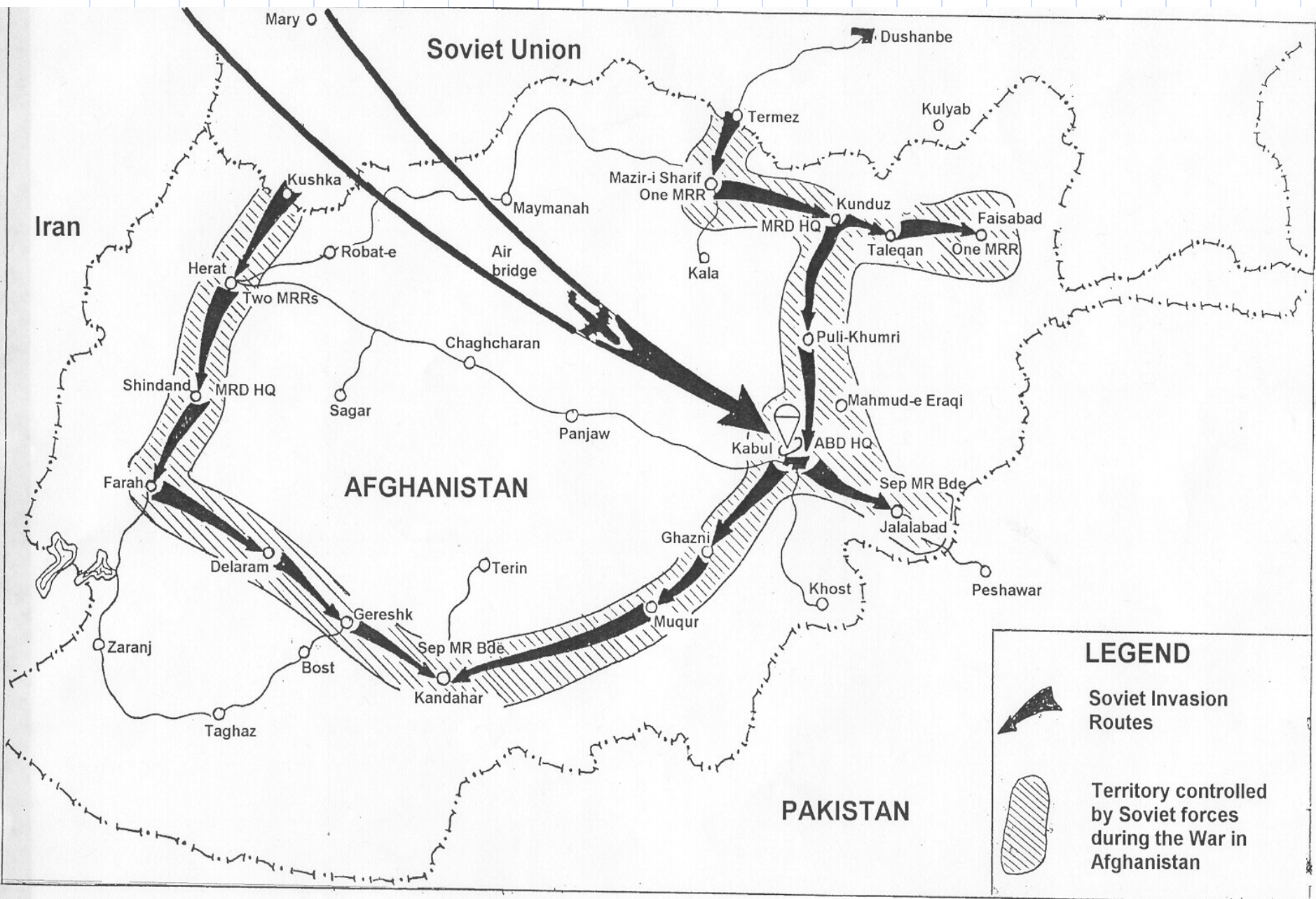
Soviet penetration of Afghanistan

- ◆ Military, political and economic advisers throughout DRA
- ◆ Soviet squadron flying aircraft with Afghan markings and wear Afghan uniforms
- ◆ “Muslim” battalion body guards to President
- ◆ KGB Spetsnaz bodyguards, cooks, doctors to President
- ◆ Incursion under guise of military assistance

24 December 1979

invasion

- ◆ Babrak Karmal put in power
- ◆ Soviet plan to restore situation, let DRA do fighting and withdraw bulk of force within two years
- ◆ Soviets find themselves in the middle of a civil war on rugged terrain with extended LOC carrying the primary combat mission against a guerrilla enemy



Battle for control of logistics

- ◆ 85% of Soviet force tied to LOC, garrison, city security. Bulk of fighting by airborne, air assault, Spetsnaz and Separate Motorized Rifle Brigades
- ◆ Soviet airpower useless against Mujahideen, so used to devastate countryside and depopulate the rural areas

- ◆ Mujahideen forced to establish series of logistics depots, dumps and supply points
- ◆ Spetsnaz primary mission is counter caravan ambush
- ◆ Mujahideen attempt to strangle Soviets through attacks on convoys, pipelines and relief columns

Eternal truths in Afghanistan

- ◆ Never a fight “to the knife”. When the battle is lost, kick out the rear guard & go to the mountains
- ◆ Seasonal fighting begins with spring thaw in April, slows down for heat of July, resumes September-November
- ◆ Switching sides is common
- ◆ Loyalty can be rented for a small bag of gold

Funneling aid to the Mujahideen

- ◆ US, Britain, China, Saudi Arabia, UAE through Pakistan ISIS
- ◆ Iranian aid through Iran
- ◆ US/British aid in the form of physical supplies, weapons and ammunition
- ◆ Saudi Arabian and UAE aid in cash

Pakistan's concerns

- ◆ Soviet presence on border would be permanent
- ◆ Pashtunistan issue
- ◆ India is primary threat
- ◆ Large refugee presence in Northwest Frontier Province
- ◆ Opportunity to modernize armed forces

The Pakistan Funnel

- ◆ All aid funneled through seven Afghan religious-based factions—three moderate and four fundamentalist
- ◆ All Mujahideen had to join one of the factions to receive aid—bulk of aid through most extreme—and anti-US of the factions
- ◆ Pakistan wanted most implacable element to lead fight for generations
- ◆ Took power and prestige from natural leaders and transferred it to the religious extremists

Aid in Cash or Kind

- ◆ US afraid of graft and theft, so issued supplies, weapons and ammunition
- ◆ What is available is not always what is needed, so ends up sold in bazaars for needed items
- ◆ Mujahideen are unpaid volunteers, so best captured material ended up sold to support families

◆ Issue items had to be transported to the Mujahideen group.

Transport fees not included in US aid

◆ Most items needed were for sale in Afghanistan's bazaars

◆ Cash easier to carry

Dealing with the teamsters

- ◆ No scab carriers
- ◆ 10% toll on goods per tribal area
- ◆ Soviet air and artillery do free fire on mules and camels
- ◆ Carrier fee includes replacement on lost mules and camels
- ◆ Hardship bands don't get repeat carriers

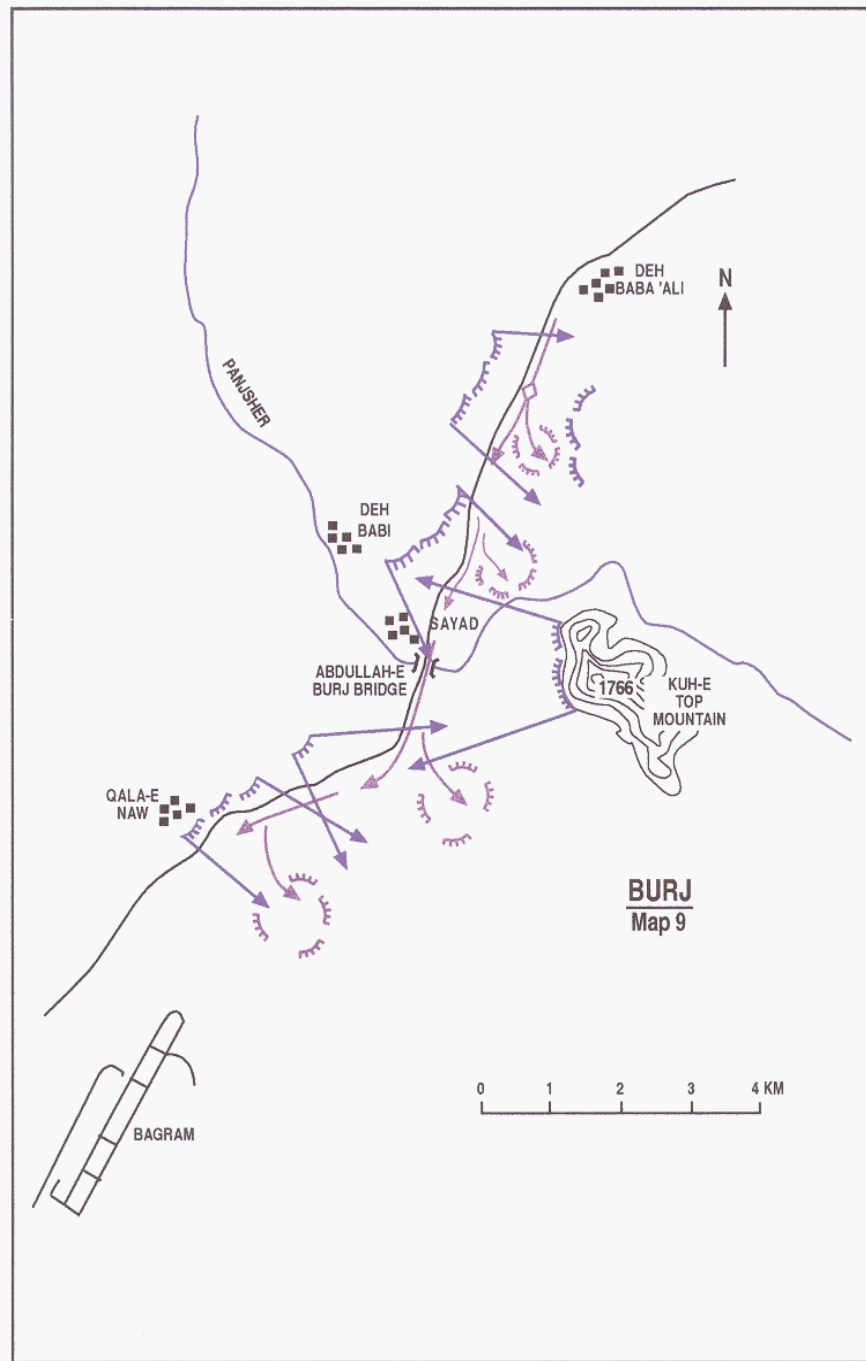
Results

- ◆ 1.3 million Afghans dead, 5.5 million refugees and 2 million internal refugees
- ◆ Afghan society torn apart and warlords and mullahs left in charge
- ◆ Country goes from liberal to arch-fundamentalist orientation
- ◆ The educated and moderate have fled in a world-wide Diaspora

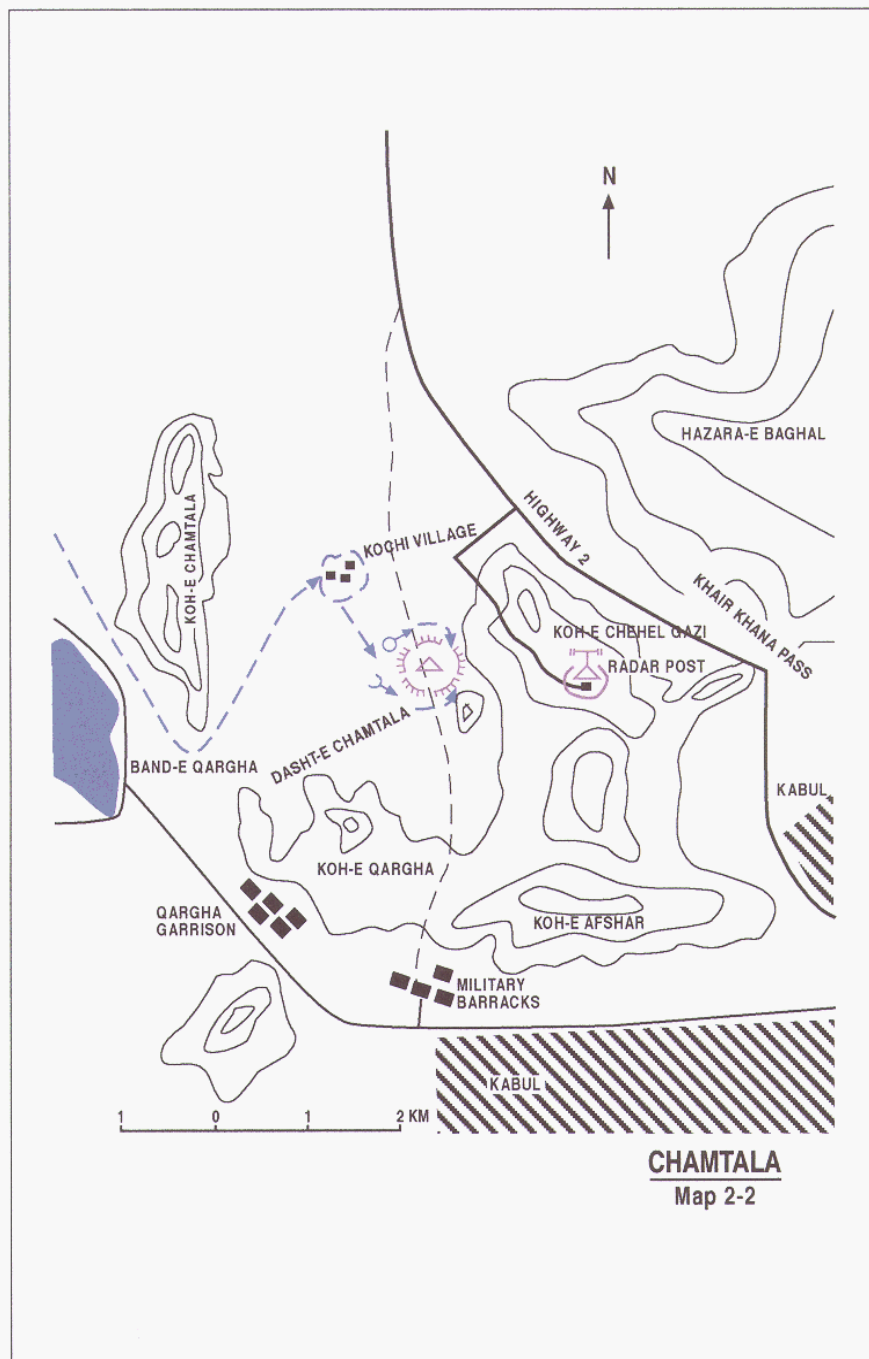
Mujahideen Primary Tactics

- ◆ Ambush
- ◆ Raid
- ◆ Shelling attack
- ◆ Base camp defense
- ◆ Counter ambush

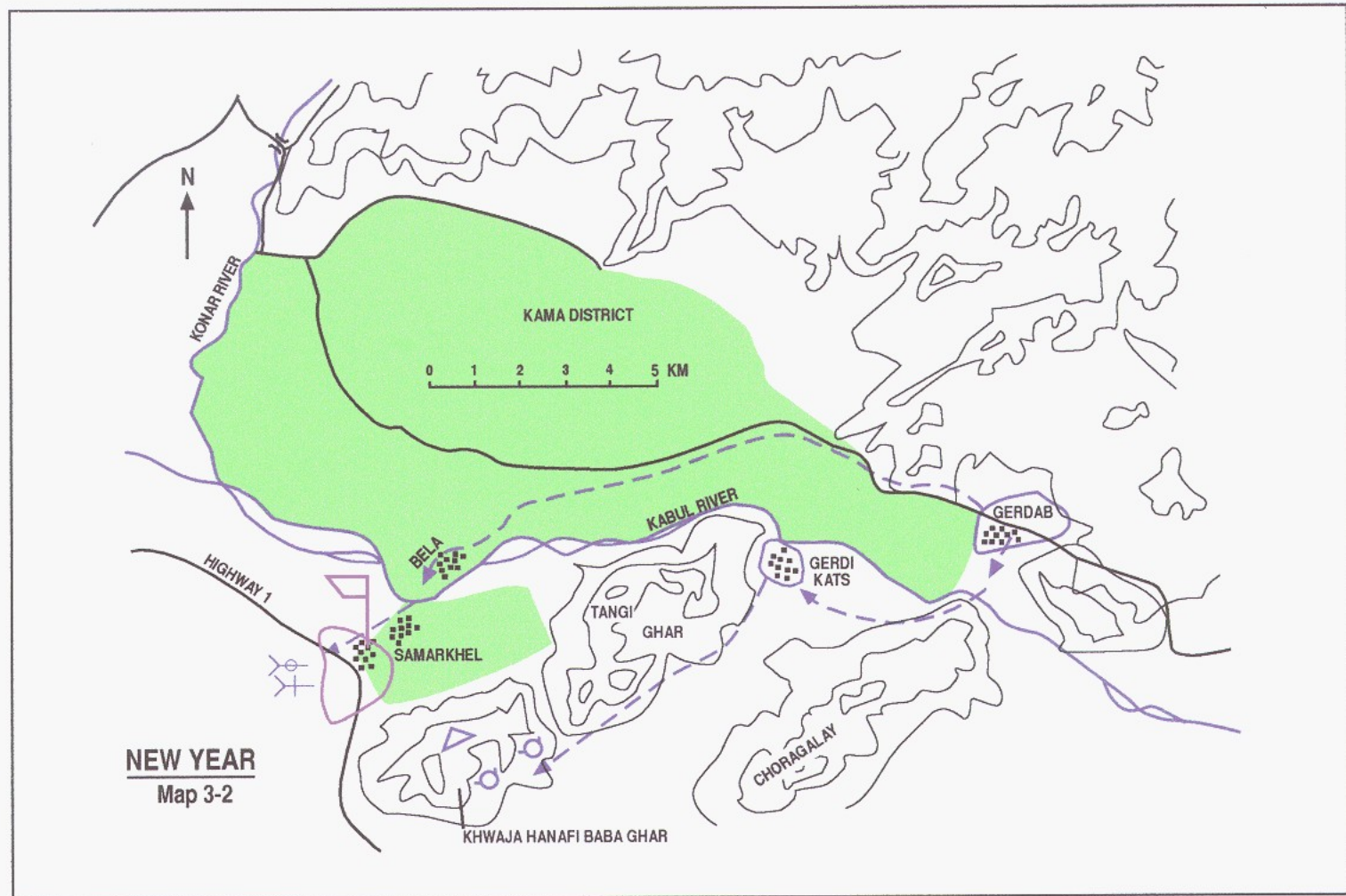
Ambush



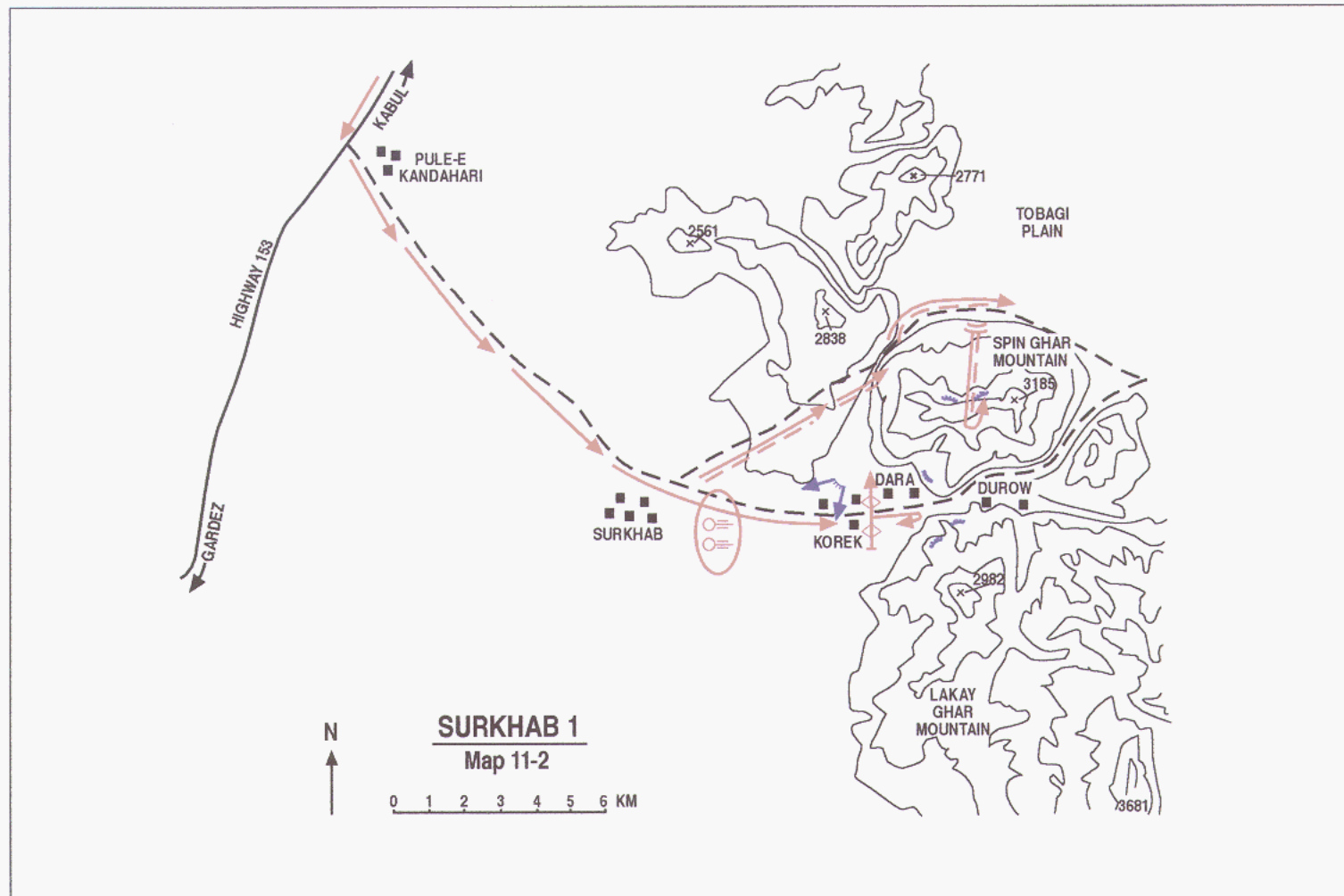
Raid

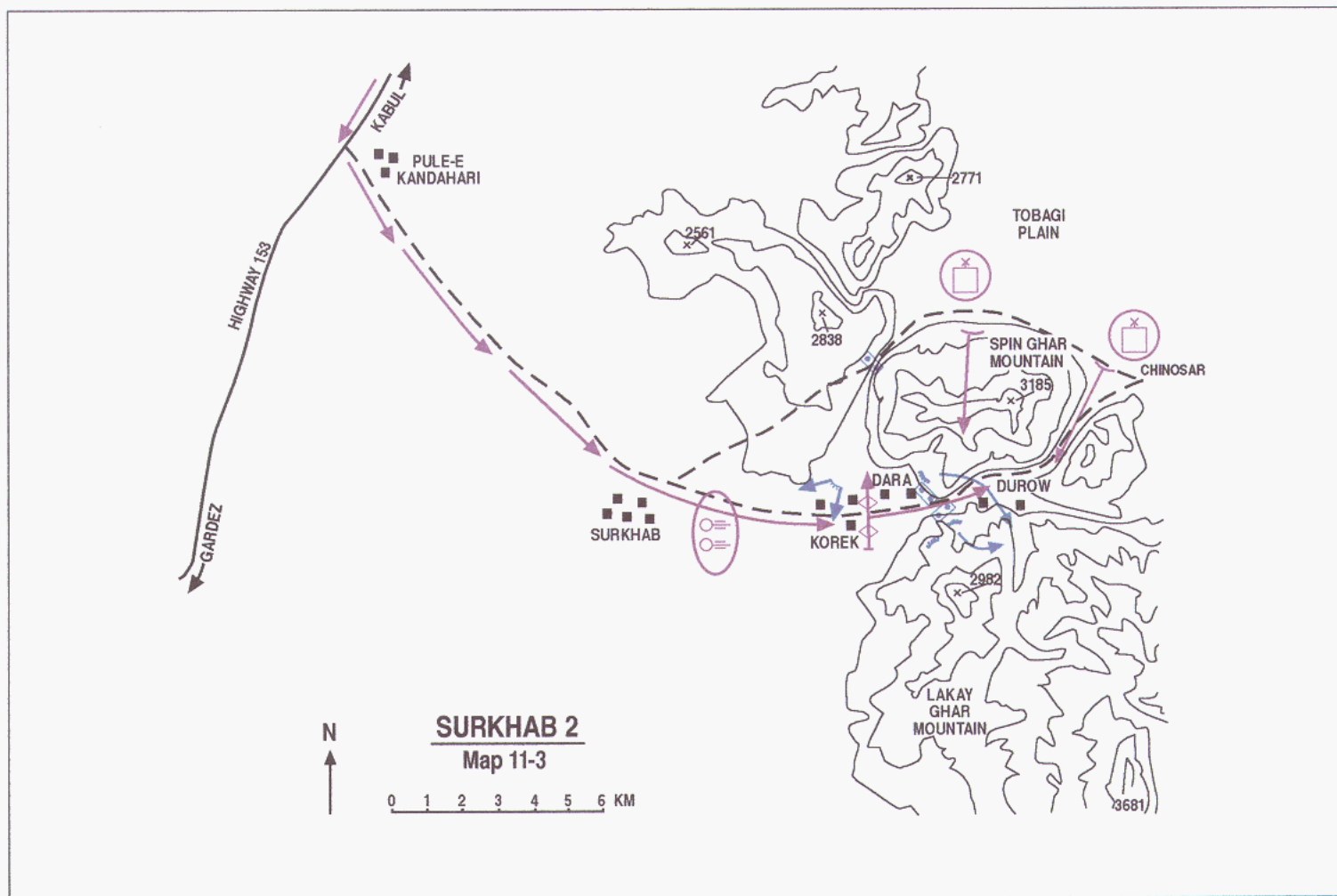


Shelling Attack

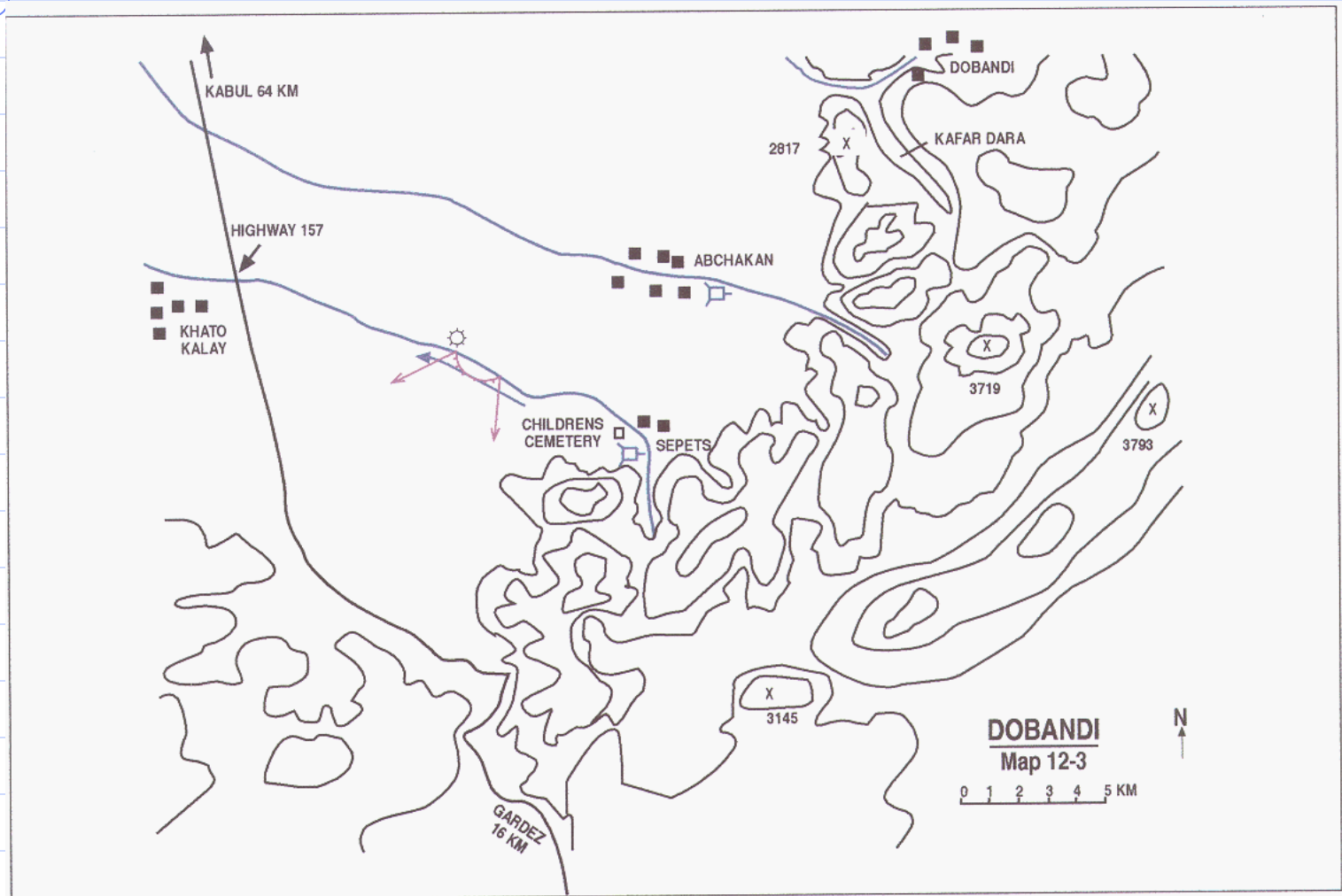


Base Camp Defense





Counter Ambush



Lessons Learned

- ◆ Guerrilla war is a contest of endurance and national will. The side with the highest moral commitment will hold the ground at conflict's end. Battle field victory is almost irrelevant.
- ◆ Air domination is irrelevant unless precisely targeted
- ◆ Secure logistics and LOC essential
- ◆ Conventional tactics, equipment and weapons require major adjustment or replacement

◆ Conventional war force structure inappropriate

◆ Tanks of limited value. Light infantry and engineers at a premium

◆ Medical support paramount

◆ Logistics determines the scope of activity and force size either side can field

◆ Information battle essential to maintaining external support

Taliban

- ◆ Resulted from power vacuum
- ◆ More of an idea than a government
- ◆ No central government but moral authority
- ◆ Not Mujahideen, but children of the camps
- ◆ Light cavalry/mounted rifle tactics
- ◆ With collapse, preventing guerrilla war

Enter the US

- ◆ Northern alliance allies-Russia, India, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
- ◆ Taliban allies-Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE
- ◆ SOF makes main attack with conventional forces for heavy lifting
- ◆ SOF as FAC for Northern Alliance



- ◆ Taliban linear light-cavalry formations easily taken apart from air, but bulk escape into mountains
- ◆ Taliban leadership escapes as SOF follows to Tora Bora and Zhawar
- ◆ Large assemblage at Sharikot
 - Expected to run
 - Afghan force to make main attack
 - Humint hard to develop



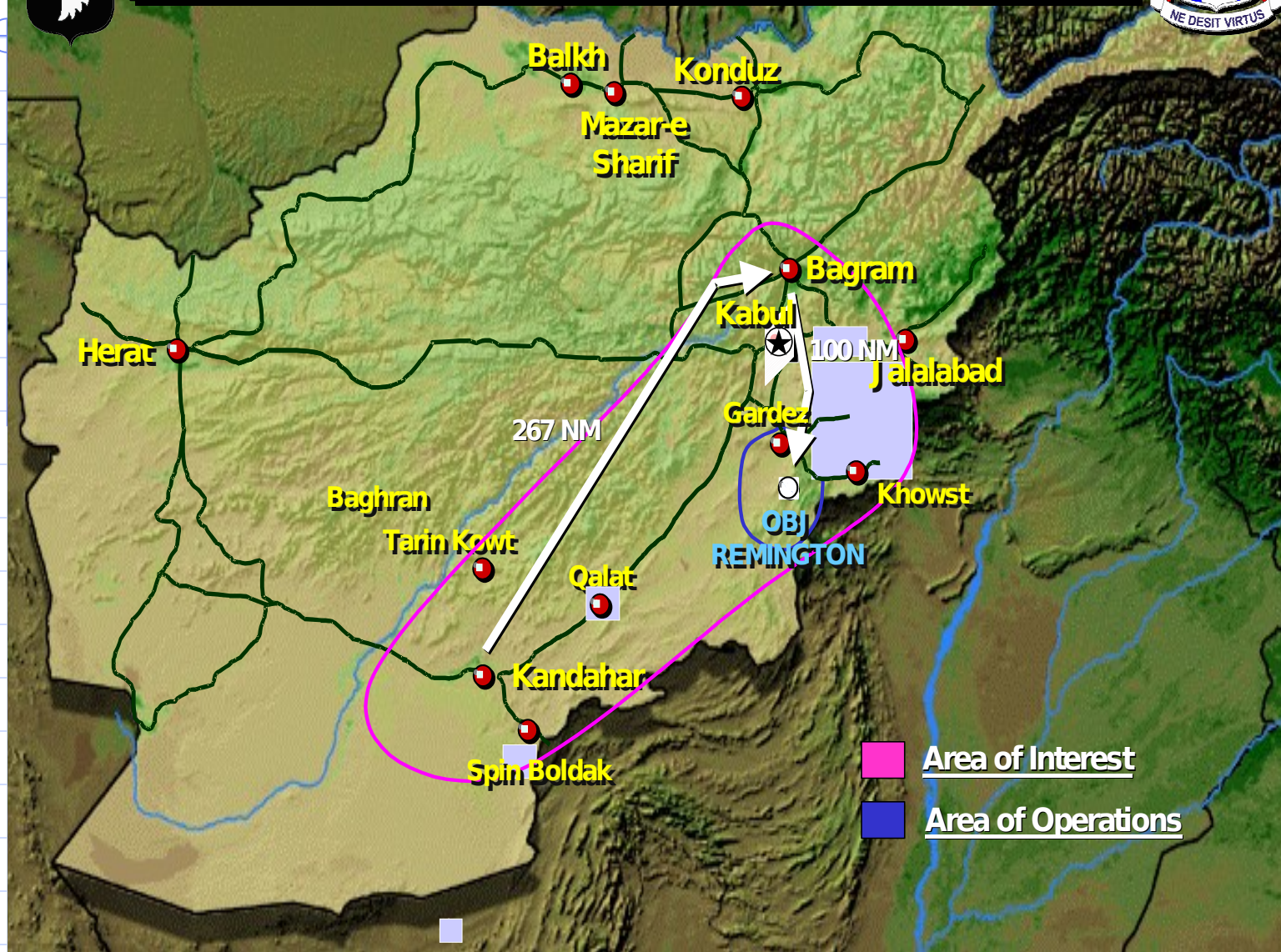








AREA OF OPERATIONS/ AREA OF INTEREST

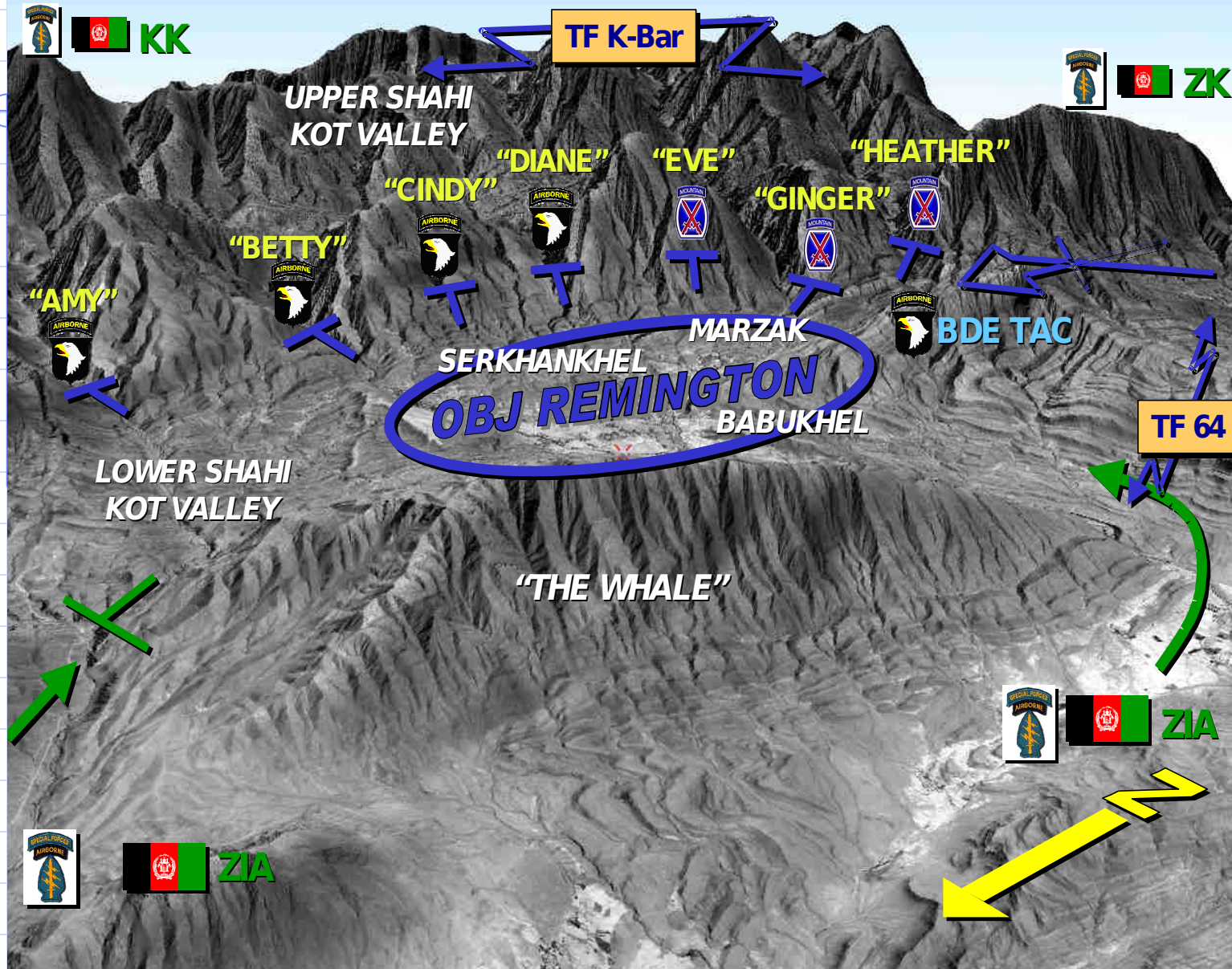


Area Of Operations

OBJ Remington

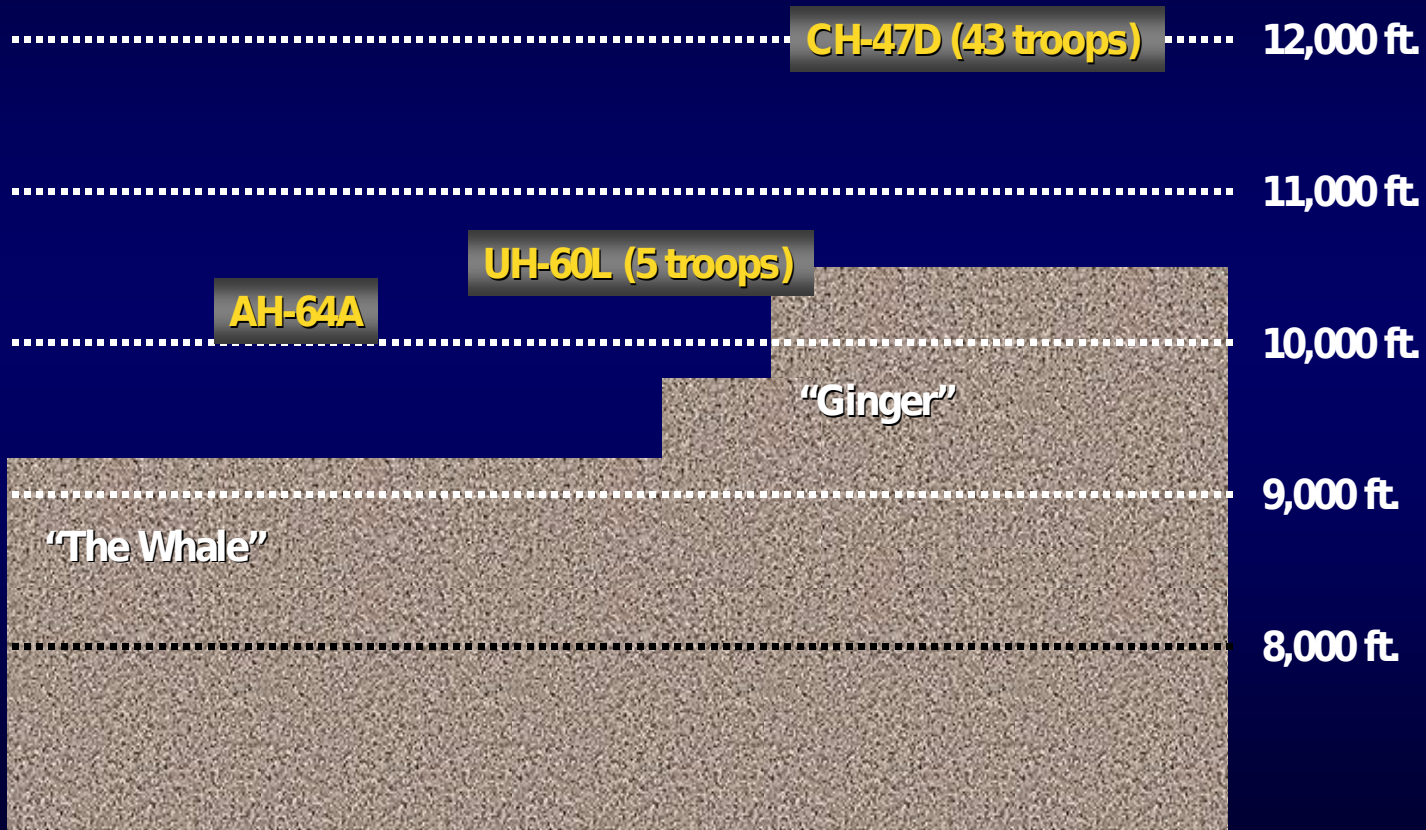


CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION





AREA OF OPERATIONS





Post-Anaconda

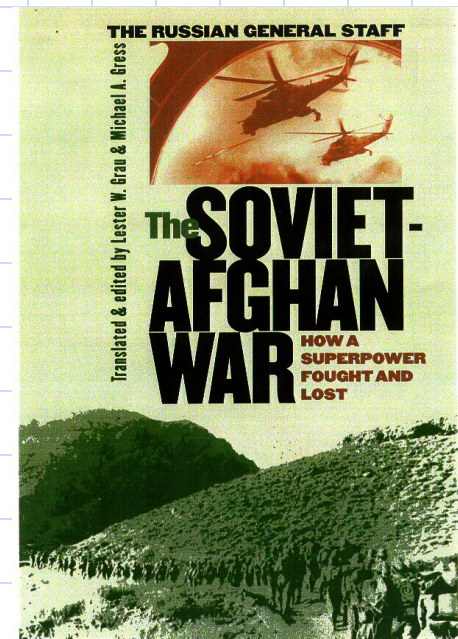
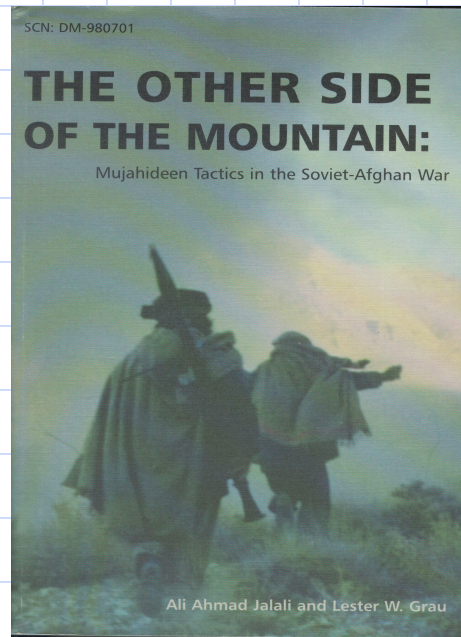
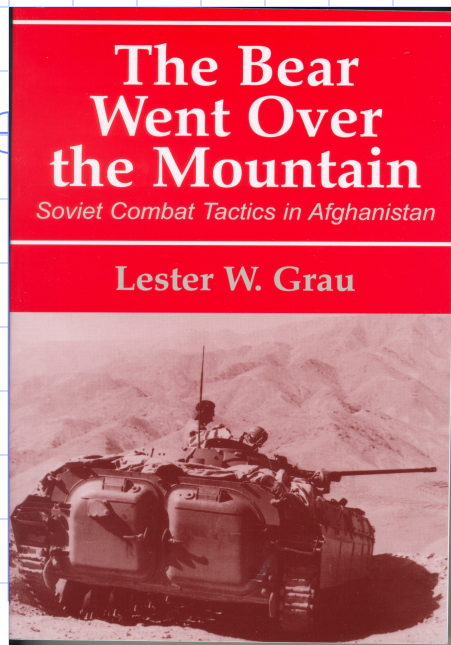
- ◆ No major challenge to US strength while opposition studies US for weaknesses and patterns
- ◆ Reversion to guerrilla war
- ◆ Waiting game

End Game

- ◆ Build on Diaspora and civic leaders
- ◆ Rebuild the economy and education
- ◆ Keep aid out of religious organizations
- ◆ Guaranteed by all the neighbors plus US and Russia. India is the wild card.
- ◆ Restoration of civic society
- ◆ Public health, drinking water









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